High Tech Exchange in Kollam District

4056. SHRI N.K. PREMCHANDRAN : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government are aware that Kollam district of Kerala has been suffering hard to cater their Telecom needs at present;

(b) whether the Government propose to establish an OCB High Tech Exchange having the facility of integrated service digital network in Kollam district;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) if not, the reasons thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA) : (a) The status of clearance of waiting list in Kollam is relatively much better compared to other parts of Kerala. The demand growth rate in Kerala has been very high (about 35%) as against growth rate of about 21% for the country as a whole.

(b) and (c) A New Technology Exchange having facility of integrated services digital network is proposed to be installed in Kollam district.

(d) Does not arise in view of (b) above.

Setting up of Branch of Central Tourist Information Bureau

4057. SHRI A.G.S. RAM BABU : Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government propose to set up a branch of the Central Tourist Information Bureau at Madurai;

(b) if so, the time by which it is likely to be set up; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF TOURISM (SHRI SRIKANTA JENA): (a) No Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) The Department of Tourism, Government of India has its tourist offices at major tourist centres frequented by International and Domestic tourists. The four Regional Tourist Offices located at Delhi, Mumbai, Calcutta and Chennai look after their respective regions.

Casual Announcer in Garhwali and Kumaoni in Nazibabad

4058. SHRI PRABHU DAYAL KATHERIA : Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have received complaints that Garhwali/Kumaoni programmes are being broadcast with the help of those who have not qualified in audition test from Aakashvani Kendra, Nazibabad;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) the number of Garhwali and Kumaoni casual announcers working at present in the said Aakashvani Kendra, respectively;

(d) whether the Government propose to regularise them; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM) : (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) At present Six casual Announcers are working in AIR Najibabad.

(d) No, Sir.

(e) There is no provision in the existing Recruitment Rules for regularisation of casual Announcers.

AIDS among Railway Employees

4059. SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government are aware of the growing incidence of AIDS among railway employees in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the Government intend to provide special assistance to the railways to deal with the developing situation regarding AIDS among railway employees; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) National projections suggest an increasing incidence of AIDS in the Indian population, which perhaps include railwaymen and their families. Facilities for testing the presence of HIV in the blood have only recently been established in most of the hospitals of the Indian Railways. Preliminary data suggests a rise in HIV positivity from 1.08% in 1995 to 1.2% in 1996 of the samples tested.

(c) and (d) NACO under the aegis of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare is providing assistance for training of Medical and Para-medical staff including confirmatory testing for HIV of blood samples from railway hospitals in their approved referral centres.